

Spiritually Leading Your Children from Birth to High School Graduation

Richard Ross, PhD

Introduction

Why the Home Must Be the Primary Teacher of the Faith

1. Parents have children during the most impressionable years of life.
2. Parents have children over an extended period.
3. Parents teach children in everyday life situations.
4. The home setting allows for repeated teaching.
5. The home offers the opportunity to observe the results of teaching.
6. Children learn by observation of other members of the family, especially of parents.
7. The home setting provides a variety of experiences.
8. Parents are seen as a primary source of authority.
9. Children have a desire for parents' approval.
10. In the home, parents have time to deal with the child as an individual.

Dr. Don Whitney (Southern Seminary):

"Having your children in a good, Bible-teaching local church is one crucial aspect of Christian parenting, but it is not enough for conveying your faith to your children. Moreover, it is unlikely the exposure to church once or twice a week will impress your children enough with the greatness and glory of God that they will want to pursue Him once they leave home."

National Study of Youth and Religion

Following his nationwide telephone survey of 3,290 teens and their parents, as well as 250 in-depth interviews, sociologist Dr. Christian Smith concluded, "Most teenagers and their parents may not realize it, but a lot of research in the sociology of religion suggests that the most important social influence in shaping young people's religious lives is the religious life modeled and taught to them by their parents."

Specific Ways to Spiritually Lead Your Children

Daily

1. Pray for your children.

2. Pray with your children “when you lie down and when you get up” (Deut. 6:7).
Who needs bedtime prayers the most, a two-year-old or a sixteen-year-old?
3. Talk about biblical truth and your own spiritual life in the flow of family life, “when you walk along the road.”
4. Model your faith, morality, and values. Let children see your thoughts and choices.

Breakfast Dates

One-on-one breakfast dates every week

Dinner Questions

Share “highs” and “lows” of the day.

Ask, “How did you see God at work today?” (God Sightings)

Weekly

- Family worship could be called a “faith talk.”
- Gather your family to “sit in your house” (Deut. 6:7) for a time of worship.
- Lead a discussion from Scripture, worship (possibly with music), and pray in non-boring ways.
- Customize the experience to the developmental level of the children.

Faith Talks

Warm and enjoyable

1. Last Sunday Sermon
2. Last Sunday Life Group
3. Printed—ask pastors
4. Your daily readings

Express How You Think

1. How you make decisions
2. How you set priorities
3. Speak of Jesus with passion

If you gather as a family to really pray, read from Scripture, and talk about faith, then your children probably will do the same with your future grandchildren. (The opposite equally is true).

Busyness is not the real threat to family worship, for families consistently make time for what they *really* believe is most important.

Parents *will* leave a legacy, one direction or the other.

Monthly

- Do something as a family to serve others in Christ’s name.

Yearly

- Go as a family on mission adventures.

Yearly, or more often, go with Christ as a family on mission adventures. You may need to partner with church leaders to become knowledgeable about opportunities for your family.

- Consider arranging family finances to take a family mission trip in the U.S. or internationally – either your family alone or with other families.
- Consider giving one day of a typical family vacation to do something of kingdom importance (feed people in the name of Christ, paint a ministry building, etc.).

AND create anticipation in a child that he or she will go to the front lines of missions for a substantial time while in high school or college – and begin saving to fund that adventure.

Summary

- Sometimes parents hold the ropes while students go out on mission.
“Hold the rope” means prayer and financial support.
- Sometimes students hold the ropes while the parents go.
- And sometimes the family goes on mission together.
- Each of your children has a calling on his or her life.
- The primary goal of parenting is to propel your child in the direction of fulfilling that calling for the glory of God.

Richard Ross, PhD, professor of student ministry, Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.
www.RichardARoss.com [www.Facebook.com/rossrichard](https://www.facebook.com/rossrichard) [www.Twitter.com/richardaross](https://www.twitter.com/richardaross)